

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Allen Boyd (D-North Florida) today introduced the Gulf Oyster Protection Act of 2009 in the House of Representatives, legislation that would prohibit the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) from using federal funds to implement any regulations that would inhibit oyster harvesting in the Gulf Coast during the months of May to November. Congressman Boyd's position on the House Appropriations Agriculture Subcommittee, which has jurisdiction over funding for the FDA, will allow him to continue his efforts to prevent the FDA from imposing harmful new regulations on Gulf Coast oyster production.

"Through my seat on the House Appropriations Committee, I will be working at every juncture to get more answers and to block the FDA from implementing these harmful regulations," said Congressman Boyd. "The FDA has provided no justification as to why they would impose this new regulation on shellfish farmers, and little consideration seems to be given to the impact that this would have on the industry and the citizens trying to earn a living. This legislation will protect the livelihood of our Gulf Coast oyster farmers by ensuring they can continue to operate in the same safe, efficient and reliable manner they have been for over a hundred years."

Last month, Congressman Boyd sent a letter to Dr. Margaret Hamburg, Commissioner of the FDA, urging the FDA to retract any mandatory actions that would inhibit oyster harvesting in the Gulf during the months of May through November. The proposed reformulated FDA policy would put in place additional controls to prevent *Vibrio vulnificus* (V.v.) infections by mandating that all oysters harvested in Gulf Coast waters from May to November be subjected to a procedure known as Post Harvest Processing. Currently, only 15 percent of oysters retrieved from Gulf waters undergo this procedure.

The oyster industry has worked with the FDA for years to take voluntary steps to reduce the disease and death from V.v., extremely rare bacteria that affect fewer people than were struck by lightning last year. Since 2001, the incident rate of V.v. has declined 35 percent largely due to voluntary efforts implemented by the oyster industry. According to the FDA's own analysis, V.v. now affects less than 30 individuals on average and results in fewer than 15 deaths per year, primarily in populations already susceptible to these rare bacteria.

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